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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHISINAU 001362

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [EAID](#) [PGOV](#) [MD](#)
SUBJECT: SHEVCHUK: MOLDOVA NOT A RELIABLE PARTNER

Classified By: Ambassador Michael D. Kirby for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador's November 9 meeting with Transnistria's Parliamentary Speaker Evgeny Shevchuk took place against the backdrop of a controversial decree adopted by the Government of Moldova on November 7, requiring that all TN vehicles register with Chisinau. Shevchuk charged that this decree had cost Voronin any goodwill created in TN by his recent confidence-building measures and demonstrated that Moldova is not a reliable negotiating partner. Fallout from the decree would strengthen the TN radicals, Shevchuk believed. He called upon the GOM to reverse the decree, and asked the Ambassador's assistance in urging this. The Ambassador promised to discuss it with President Voronin and Minister for Reintegration Sova. Shevchuk reiterated Transnistrian interest in receiving drought assistance from the USG, and suggested that the health sector was a second critical area for aid. The Ambassador and the Speaker promised continued contacts to find concrete mechanisms for cooperation. End Summary.

Vehicle Reistration Decree Costs Voronin TN Goodwill

¶2. (C) A November 9 meeting in Tiraspol gave Transnistrian Parliamentary Speaker Evgeny Shevchuk an opportunity to vent to the Ambassador his anger about the recent Moldovan decree introducing new rules for registering TN vehicles. The decree stipulates a deadline by which vehicles with Transnistrian license plates must register with Chisinau, else they would not be allowed to cross into the right-bank or travel abroad. Shevchuk complained that this decree affected every family with a car and every public vehicle, limiting their freedom of movement. Shevchuk gave the Ambassador a copy of the May 16, 2001, accord signed by both Voronin and Smirnov, agreeing to recognize each other's license plates. He complained that this new decree proved that Moldova was not a reliable negotiating partner and did not fulfill its prior promises.

¶3. (C) Shevchuk said that even prior to this new requirement Transnistrians had heavily criticized his own moderate approach. The new decree would now provide fertile ground for his critics and give a louder voice to the radicals. Angry counter-proposals were already circulating, calling for the introduction of a visa regime for right-bank Moldovans. Shevchuk claimed that this decree had cost Voronin the recent goodwill created in TN by his confidence-building measures.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador responded that, when he first heard about the decree, he had suggested it would be counter-productive. He offered some explanation of issues regarding the registration of vehicles which the GOM was seeking to rectify: (1) a growing number of right-bank Moldovan citizens were registering their cars on the left bank to avoid paying higher taxes in Chisinau; (2) to close a loophole allowing cars 7-10 years old, which could not register in Chisinau, to register in Transnistria. Shevchuk

appealed to the Ambassador to explain to Moldovan leaders that this decree was having a negative influence on the negotiating process and to urge Chisinau authorities to withdraw the decree. The Ambassador promised to raise this issue with both President Voronin and Minister for Reintegration Vasile Sova.

TN Wants Drought Aid and Health Sector Support

15. (C) Shevchuk repeated his verbal request for drought assistance, and said that the Supreme Soviet had already made an appeal to 5 plus 2 partners including the USG. He thanked the Ambassador for the U.S. willingness to help, and suggested getting agricultural specialists from both sides together to discuss the specifics of possible assistance. Shevchuk stipulated that TN could not receive aid through GOM channels. The Ambassador reassured him that we would look at implementing a mechanism similar to what was done on the right bank, using USAID contractor CNFA to distribute seeds directly to the farmers. As the fall planting season was over, the Ambassador noted that the USG was now considering providing seeds for the spring planting.

16. (C) Shevchuk also asked for help to the TN health sector. The Ambassador explained that embassy officials had met recently with the Minister of Health and visited several health facilities. We had agreed with the Minister to expand the Embassy's HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis A and B, and tuberculosis programs, and in follow-up meetings would continue to explore assistance possibilities.

Considering Venue for a Lupu Meeting

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17. (C) The Ambassador asked Shevchuk about possible modalities for a meeting with Moldovan Speaker Lupu that would bring Shevchuk and Lupu together. Shevchuk said that he regards Lupu as a balanced politician with a moderate approach, and was willing to meet with him. Shevchuk agreed that the Kyiv conference might have provided a good venue, but he had not been invited, and it would be too late now to organize a trip for Wednesday. Shevchuk promised to study a draft French Senate proposal to host a group of TN and Moldovan parliamentarians, but suggested that the optimal venue for a meeting of the two Speakers would be Odessa, Kyiv, or even Russia, if it were more convenient for Lupu. This would avoid any complicated EU visa issues a meeting in France might generate, and Shevchuk did not want the notoriety of being the first TN official to travel to Europe despite the visa ban. Of course, added Shevchuk, Lupu would be welcome to come to Tiraspol if he were willing to do so.

Next Steps

18. (C) The Ambassador noted that Embassy representatives would continue contacts with the Ministry of Health, and that we would be contacting the Ministry of Education about possible interaction with students, including expanded Summer Work and Travel opportunities for TN students. In addition we would arrange to get USAID agricultural aid specialists together with TN Ministry of Agriculture to discuss specifics of possible drought-related assistance. Shevchuk proposed establishing a mechanism of cooperation between the U.S. Embassy and Transnistrian experts to implement various ideas, and it was agreed that Pol/Econ Chief and Shevchuk's Political Advisor would remain in contact as needed to make necessary arrangements.

Comment:

19. (C) The GOM's poorly-timed, ill-conceived license plate

measure has weakened the position of the moderate forces within TN who were ready for dialogue with Chisinau and strengthened the hand of those who want to maintain the status quo. Chisinau's best option at this point would be to modify the decree to remove its most onerous provisions so as to demonstrate that it holds no animus towards ordinary Transnistrian citizens.

KIRBY